MISQ Archivist

The Interplay of IT Users' Coping Strategies: Uncovering Momentary Emotional Load, Routes, and Sequences

Markus Salo, Markus Makkonen, and Riitta Hekkala

Abstract

Despite the positive aspects of information technology (IT) use, it is common for users to experience negative IT incidents. Examples of negative IT incidents include getting lost in an unfamiliar country due to a dysfunctional map application and missing a monetary insurance benefit due to the failure of an activity tracker application. Such incidents can harm IT providers by giving rise to user dissatisfaction, discontinued use, switching, and negative word-of-mouth. To minimize this harm, it is important to understand how users cope after negative incidents. Specifically, information systems (IS) researchers have called for research that uncovers the complex interplay of IT users' coping strategies (e.g., users' coping efforts after employing one strategy and combinations of several consecutive strategies). To address these calls, we conducted a mixed methods study that examined mobile application users' coping strategies after highly negative incidents. We developed a model that explains how users navigate between problem-focused strategies, emotion-focused strategies, and appraisals. As theoretical contributions, we identify coping sequences and distinct routes from the coping strategies, uncover the role of momentary emotional load, and present IT-specific insights. As practical implications, we identify favorable and unfavorable coping strategies and sequences from both the IT providers' and the users' perspectives.

Keywords: Coping, route, sequence, problem-focused, emotion-focused, appraisal, IT incident, IT use